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## FACT SHEET

July 2006

# Violence Against Women Education Project

Domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are critical issues facing family, criminal, and juvenile courts in California. The Violence Against Women Education Project (VAWEP) is an initiative designed to provide the courts with information, technical assistance, educational materials, and programs on the courts' role in responding to cases involving these issues. VAWEP is a project of the Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC) of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and is being implemented in collaboration with the AOC Education Division/Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER). The project is funded by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) with resources from the federal Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). The project's planning committee, composed of judicial officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, attorneys with expertise in the field of domestic violence, victim advocates, and other experts, guides the project staff in identifying key training issues and developing appropriate educational programming. Efforts to develop and augment educational events and curricula related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are ongoing and are designed to be responsive to the identified needs of California courts.

### Project Goals

#### The goals of VAWEP are to:

- Identify primary educational and information needs of the courts on domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking issues;
- Initiate new and enhance existing judicial branch educational programming pertaining to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, including the delivery of regional and local training events;
- Develop and compile useful information for the courts on domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking issues that relates specifically to California law;
- Institutionalize inclusion of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking issues in all relevant judicial branch education curricula, programs, and publications;

- Create incentives designed to increase attendance and participation in judicial branch education relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking;
- Increase communication among courts regarding emerging promising practices for responding to cases involving domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking;
- Provide jurisdiction-specific technical assistance on domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking issues of the greatest import to local courts; and
- Create educational tools that aid in the administration of justice for self-represented litigants in domestic violence cases.

#### Educational Events and Technical Assistance

##### **Planned events include the following:**

##### **Domestic Violence Judicial Institute (Spring 2006)**

The project uses a national interdisciplinary curriculum developed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Family Violence Prevention Fund to present one educational program based on the curriculum. Modeled on earlier statewide events, the program will include workshops on fact-finding, judicial officers' roles in a community response to domestic violence, fairness and cultural issues in domestic violence cases, decision-making skills and enforcement, victim behavior, and perpetrator behavior. The program includes sessions designed to engage judicial officers in practical courtroom exercises addressing the complexity of domestic violence cases and the specific issues facing California courts.

New for 2006 and addressing concerns raised during prior institutes, the project offers a pre-institute workshop to address the "nuts and bolts" of California law in domestic violence cases. The pre-institute workshop provides a judge new to a criminal or family law assignment with the basics of domestic violence cases, focusing on common errors, unique features, and "hot spots." Issues arising in criminal domestic violence cases include emergency protective orders, pretrial release and bail, criminal protective orders issued both pretrial and as a mandatory condition of probation, sentencing, review hearings, and probation violations. Issues related to family law include statutory requirements for restraining orders, firearms issues, and cross-over issues such as avoiding conflicting orders.

**Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Courses at the Continuing Judicial Studies Program (CJSP) (October 2005, January 2006, and August 2006)**

VAWEP develops, staffs, and sponsors a series of in-depth courses on domestic violence and sexual assault that are integrated into this showcase program of CJER.

The Fall 2005, Winter 2006, and Summer 2006 CJSP programs were designed to encompass six courses on domestic violence and sexual assault issues as detailed below.

Fall CJSP:               “Domestic Violence and Family Law”  
                              “Difficult Custody Cases: Effects of Domestic Violence on  
                                  Child Development”

These two components are a part of the Family Law Overview course, which is typically taken by judicial officers new to a family law assignment. They include a general discussion of domestic violence and family law and a focus on child development and custody.

Winter CJSP:           “Domestic Violence and Family Law”  
                              “Difficult Custody Cases: Effects of Domestic Violence on  
                                  Child Development”  
                              “Criminal Law Overview: Protective Orders, Domestic  
                                  Violence Trials, and Stalking”

The family law courses are again integrated into the Winter Family Law Overview course. For the first time, domestic violence and criminal procedure issues are part of the Criminal Law Overview course typically taken by judicial officers new to a criminal law assignment.

Summer CJSP:        “Decision Making in Sexual Assault Cases”  
                              “Domestic Violence and Immigration”  
                              “Faculty Development”

The project offers a comprehensive course on sexual assault cases from arraignment to disposition. The course includes a component on DNA and one on the sexually violent predator. A course on domestic violence and immigration issues is also offered for judges and commissioners in criminal, family, and juvenile law assignments.

This year a faculty development course will be offered for the first time that will assist judges interested in teaching in the fields of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking.

**Judicial Institute Trainings (March, April, and May 2006)**

Courses are offered at the Criminal Law Institute in March and the Cow County Judges Institute in May. Additional courses are presented at the Family Law and Juvenile Law Institutes.

These courses focus on the following subject areas:

- Stalking Cases and Court Security
- Criminal Domestic Violence (offered twice)
- Domestic Violence and Judicial Ethics
- Developing Best Practices in Domestic Violence Cases
- Domestic Violence in Juvenile Cases

**Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Courses, Judicial College (June 2006)**

Courses on issues of both domestic violence and sexual assault are delivered as part of the nationally recognized B. E. Witkin Judicial College of California, a program providing comprehensive education for all new superior court judges, commissioners, and referees. The courses provide background information on domestic violence and guidance for judicial decision making in sexual assault cases.

**Court Forums (Spring/Summer 2006)**

Two invitation-only court forums are convened to address issues of violence against women that are of particular relevance to the California courts. A Firearms Colloquium includes an in-depth review of current court practices for the relinquishment of firearms and brainstorms concepts for inclusion in a statewide initiative of best practices. Currently only six trial court systems have the ability to enter restraining orders directly into the Domestic Violence Restraining Order System (DVROS) via the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS). The CLETS Forum will review current court operations and develop best practices for the prompt and accurate entry of restraining orders into DVROS.

**Domestic Violence Safety Partnership Program (Ongoing in 2006)**

VAWEP provides targeted, local technical assistance to applicant courts that have an identified need for training. In the past, VAWEP has received many requests from courts about specific information needs, which can range from understanding warning signs for lethality in domestic violence cases to improving communication between the many types of courts that may be involved in a particular case. The project provides experts whose specialties vary based on the need of the specific court. This assistance is accomplished by delivering a substantive expert to speak to the issues at hand, providing speakers with expertise in violence against women

issues at related AOC trainings, or facilitating a peer-mentoring meeting in which courts come together to learn about individual best practices. Recipients of this assistance are asked to evaluate what they have received.

### Curriculum Development and Publications

#### **VAWEP distributes the following curricula, publications, and other resource materials:**

##### **Judges Guide to Domestic Violence Cases—Revised 2005**

VAWEP updates the judges' guide as needed. This practical judges' handbook covers the following components:

- California Protective Orders
- Emergency Protective Order (EPO) Quick Reference Guide
- Firearms and Full Faith and Credit
- Immigration and Domestic Violence
- Stalking

The five components of this guide have been consolidated into one volume for easy reference and accessibility. They can also be used separately and are updated separately. Each component focuses on the information, case law, and statutes that judicial officers need to know in the relevant subject area. Revisions to any component of the guide will be posted on a Web site designed for judicial officers.

##### **Benchbook on Sexual Assault Issues**

The project publishes, distributes, and posts online a new practical benchbook for judicial officers on sexual assault issues. The benchbook explains the legal issues related to sexual assault cases and helps judicial officers make effective and appropriate orders and decisions in these complex cases. Among the topics that are included in the benchbook are relevant case law, evidence and expert testimony, sentencing, offender characteristics, and treatment of victims.

##### **Annual Report and Fact Sheet**

Project staff develops an updated annual report and this fact sheet that highlight key efforts the project has undertaken as well as judicial and court responses to those efforts. These documents are distributed to provide project information to judicial branch professionals and the public. As educational tools, they highlight best practices and innovative approaches.

**Training Curriculum for Self-Help Center Volunteers on Domestic Violence**

An online training curriculum was produced in 2005 for the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's JusticeCorps volunteer program. The online curriculum is updated as needed and is made available to other court entities working with victims of domestic violence.

**Further Information**

For additional information about VAWEP activities, please contact:

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